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#### WHY CITIES?

For the first time in human history, more than half of the world's population now lives in urban areas, a figure that is expected to climb to 70% by 2050. This rapid urbanization has exacerbated old challenges – poverty, inequality and environmental degradation – but also created new opportunities. In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular SDG 11 on sustainable cities, UNESCO believes that culture is key to making cities livable for urban residents, encouraging urban development that is truly sustainable. The evidence pointing to the importance of culture for sustainable cities is overwhelming. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the cultural and creative industries were among the fastest growing in the world, representing 30 million jobs and 3% of global GDP. Cultural activities foster social inclusion and dialogue among diverse communities, while tangible and intangible heritage are integral parts of a city's identity, creating a sense of belonging and cohesion. This makes culture particularly vital for cities recovering from conflict or disaster. UNESCO, therefore, works to promote a culture-based approach to urban development as a means of ensuring that the cities of tomorrow are safe, inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

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#### HOW DOES UNESCO WORK TO SUPPORT A CULTURE-BASED MODEL OF SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT?

- i. **Emergency response.** Following the devastating explosions in Beirut on 4 August 2020, UNESCO launched the Li Beirut initiative to support the reconstruction and recovery of the city's cultural heritage and cultural life. UNESCO's flagship initiative to "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" seeks to restore and reconstruct Mosul's cultural and educational institutions.
- ii. **Capacity building.** UNESCO has kick-started a project on the role of living heritage in cities, which will support community-based inventories of intangible cultural heritage in nine pilot cities around the world.
- iii. **Policy guidance.** UNESCO and the World Bank have launched a position paper on "Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery", which provides guidelines for integrating culture into post-crisis city reconstruction. "Voices of the City" contains a series of best practices from members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network on achieving sustainable development through culture. UNESCO's Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development, Culture: Urban Future, promotes a culture-based approach to urban planning, regeneration and development, in line with the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda.
- iv. **Normative tools.** UNESCO's 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape calls for the integration of the conservation of the built environment into the wider goals of urban development, suggesting a landscape approach for identifying, conserving and managing historic areas within their broader urban contexts.
- v. **Network mobilization.** UNESCO's Cities Platform brings together its 8 city programmes and networks from all of UNESCO's fields of expertise, in order to support cities in the development of innovative solutions to contemporary urban challenges. As part of this platform, UNESCO organized an online meeting on "Urban solutions: drawing inspiration from the action of cities in the face of COVID-19". Following a call from the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, which is made up of 246 cities from around the world, UNESCO published "UNESCO Creative Cities' Response to COVID-19", which highlights the culture-led initiatives for addressing COVID-19 implemented by Member Cities.
- vi. **Advocacy.** Through the Culture for Sustainable Urban Development Initiative, UNESCO supported Member States in advocating for a prominent place for culture in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a target on safeguarding the world's cultural and natural heritage in SDG 11 on sustainable cities. UNESCO also ensured the integration of culture into the New Urban Agenda, adopted at Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016.

# CITIES AND CULTURE

## KEY MESSAGES



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the essential role of culture as an enabler of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, particularly in SDG 11 on sustainable cities.



More than 50% of the world's population now lives in urban areas – a figure that is expected to climb to 70% by 2050.



Cities are increasingly spaces where development challenges such as poverty, inequality and environmental degradation are the most apparent and acute. Rapid and uncontrolled urbanization frequently results in social and spatial fragmentation, and in a drastic deterioration of the quality of the urban environment.



Yet cities are also engines of development, bringing together people of diverse backgrounds to exchange, innovate and create.



Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the cultural and creative industries were among the fastest growing in the world, representing 30 million jobs worldwide. The creative economy employs more people ages 15 to 29 than any other sector.



Unlocking the potential of the creative economy means promoting the overall creativity of societies, and especially cities, affirming the distinctive identity of the places where it flourishes and clusters, and improving the quality of life there. Apart from its monetary value, the creative economy generates non-monetary value that contributes to achieving people-centered, inclusive and sustainable development.



Urban heritage, including its tangible and intangible components, constitutes a key resource for enhancing the liveability of urban areas. The conservation of the built environment must be integrated into the wider goals of urban development, with a landscape approach serving as a means of maintaining urban identities.



People-centred cities are culture-centred spaces. Cities can foster social inclusion by integrating heritage and cultural activities into the planning, design and use of public spaces. Integrating heritage and traditional knowledge into urban strategies can also be a powerful source of resilience in the face of environmental concerns.

**For more information, visit:** <http://en.unesco.org/themes/culture-sustainable-development>